



**Piedras Blancas**  
**San Luis Obispo County, CA**  
**CELCP Application FY 07**

## Project Application Checklist

(Note: NOAA may modify this checklist as needed, consistent with the Paperwork Reduction Act, to effectively implement the project application and selection process.)

**The project applicant must complete and sign this Project Checklist and submit it to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, along with the other required application materials.**

### Applicant and Project Information

- 1. State:** California
- 2. Project Title:** Piedras Blancas
- 3. Project Location (Approximate):** 7 miles north of Hearst Castle, northern San Luis Obispo County, west of Highway One
- 4. Project Applicant:** California State Parks
- 5. Total Cost: \$ 5,000,000**
- |                                                |              |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>CELCP Federal share (requested amount):</b> | \$ 1,500,000 |
| <b>State/Local Match Contributions:</b>        | \$ 2,800,000 |
| <b>Other Federal:</b>                          | \$ 500,000   |
| <b>Other Non-Federal:</b>                      | \$ 200,000   |

I ATTEST THAT THE STATEMENTS MADE AND OTHER INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS CHECKLIST ARE, TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, TRUE AND ACCURATE.

---

Signature of Applicant	Date
Name of Signatory:	Nicholas Franco
Title:	District Superintendent, California State Parks, San Luis Obispo Coast District
Address:	750 Hearst Castle Road, San Simeon, CA 93452
Phone Number:	(805) 927-2065
Email:	nfranco@hearstcastle.com

**6. Project Eligibility:** *(Check all that apply. CELCP projects should meet all of these criteria, please explain any blanks below. If you need additional room to explain responses, attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist.)*

The proposed project:

- ☒ Is located in a coastal or estuarine area;
- ☒ Provides 1:1 match in the form of non-federal funds or other in-kind contribution;
- ☒ Will be held in public ownership and provide for conservation in perpetuity;
- ☒ Will provide for access to the general public, or other public benefit, as appropriate and consistent with resource protection;
- ☒ Protects important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, ecological, historical, aesthetic, or recreation values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses;
- ☒ Can be effectively managed and protected;
- ☒ Directly advances the goals, objectives, or implementation of an approved state CELCP plan or coastal management plan or program or NERR management plan approved under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), national objectives of the CZMA, or a local, regional or state watershed protection plan involving coastal states with approved CZM plans; and
- ☒ Is consistent with the state's approved CZM program.

**7. Public Benefit:**

**a.** The acquisition will be publicly held or under a publicly-controlled easement and is for public benefit. The project does not improve private property for private or commercial gain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

**b.** The property will be accessible to the general public. ☒ Yes ☐ No

**c.** If the answer to 7.b. is No, check any of the following reasons that apply and explain why access to the property will be limited.

☐ Public Safety    ☐ Resource Protection    ☐ Geographically Isolated/Inaccessible

☐ School Outings    ☐ Scientific Research    ☐ Conservation Easement

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please explain)

d. The property will be leased or rented. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No (If yes, please explain.) *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

e. The public will be charged a user fee for access to or activities on the proposed property.  
  x   Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If Yes, provide a description of the user fee that includes: how much, differential fees (if any), the need for the fees, and proposed use of the revenue.

This Project proposes to acquire land for inclusion with the California State Park system. There will be no charge to walk or bike into this facility. For vehicular entry and parking, users may be charged entry fees (approx \$4 per day) and camping (\$20-\$25 per night, depending on season). These fees are consistent with fees for other State Park facilities. Revenues generated from user fees are used for operations and maintenance of facilities within the State Park system.

## **8. Title Opinion and Appraisal:**

a. Documentation that the current owner is a willing participant in a process of negotiation for possible sale of property, or interests in property, for conservation purposes is attached. (This documentation may be in the form of a letter of willingness or intent, option letter, contract, or similar form.)   x   Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

b. The applicant has obtained and attached an independent appraisal performed by a state-certified appraiser.   x   Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

c. A title opinion or title insurance report is attached.   x   Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

## **9. Location and Site Maps:**

Site and location maps are included in the application   x   Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

A regional map showing the general location of the project and a map of the project site, which shows the location and extent of the proposed acquisition, as well as relationship to significant natural features (slope, wetlands, dunes, floodplains, access, etc.) and adjacent land uses should be included.

## **Compliance with Other Federal Authorities**

### **10. State Historic Preservation Officer's (SHPO's) Clearance and National Historic Preservation Act:**

- a. The project will affect properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/>), eligible to be listed, or otherwise protected by section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act ([www.achp.gov/nhnp.html](http://www.achp.gov/nhnp.html)) or a similar State Preservation Act. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes ☒ No
- b. The Recipient has on file the SHPO's clearance. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No ☒ Not applicable (If No, the Recipient certifies, by signing this checklist, that the SHPO clearance is being sought and that land will not be purchased until SHPO clearance is received by the Recipient.)

### **11. National Flood Insurance Program:**

- a. Is the project located in a designated special flood hazard area, floodway or "V" zone on a National Flood Insurance Program Floodway Map (<http://www.fema.gov/maps>)? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes ☒ No (If No, go to 12)
- b. Is the community in which the project is located, participating in the Flood Insurance Program ([www.fema.gov/nfip](http://www.fema.gov/nfip))? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes ☒ No

### **12. Coastal Barriers Resource Act:**

The project is located on a designated coastal barrier unit under the Coastal Barriers Resources Act ([www.fws.gov/cep/cbrunits.html](http://www.fws.gov/cep/cbrunits.html)).  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes ☒ No

If the answer is Yes, provide a brief statement below or attach to this checklist a brief analysis as to how the proposed project is consistent with the three CBRA purposes: to minimize (1) the loss of human life, (2) wasteful federal expenditures, and (3) damage to fish, wildlife and other natural resources. *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

### **13. Endangered Species Act:**

Might the proposed project adversely affect threatened or endangered species or critical habitat under the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as defined by the Endangered Species Act? ([www.fws.gov/Endangered](http://www.fws.gov/Endangered)) or ([www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species)). \_\_\_\_\_ Yes ☒ No

If the answer is No, provide a brief statement below explaining the basis for the conclusion. If the answer is Yes, provide a description of the adverse effects (minor and significant effects), the species or habitat affected, and any coordination between the state and the USFWS or NMFS. OCRM will not approve a project that USFWS or NMFS has determined will have a significant adverse affect on threatened or endangered species or critical habitat. *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

The Piedras Blancas project will preserve 18 acres in its natural setting to preclude any adverse effects to threatened or endangered species or critical habitat. In fact, this project prevents development on the site that would likely include the construction of a seawall that could damage coastal habitat in an area designated as part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. State Parks will manage any future development (i.e. potential visitor's center in an existing onsite structure, environmental camp sites) in an environmentally-sustainable and sensitive manner.

#### **14. Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act:**

Could the proposed project have significant adverse impacts on essential fish habitat for federally managed fish? \_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

#### **15. National Environmental Policy Act:**

a. The proposed project may significantly affect the human environment.  
\_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

b. The proposed project involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. \_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

c. This action would have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.  
\_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

d. This action will have highly controversial environmental effects. \_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

e. This action will have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental impacts. \_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

f. The project will have significant adverse impacts on other natural resources not covered elsewhere in this checklist, e.g., beaches and dunes, wetlands, estuarine areas, wildlife habitat, wild or scenic rivers, reefs, or other coastal resources. \_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

g. The project will have insignificant effects when performed separately, but will have significant adverse cumulative effects. \_\_\_\_ Yes   x   No

If the answer to any one subpart is Yes, then an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) may be required. For items answered Yes, provide a description of the resource(s) affected and the nature and scope of the effects. *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

#### **16. Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970:**

If the proposed project involves the acquisition and/or modernization of real property, will the proposed project cause the displacement of:

- |                     |                              |                                        |
|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| a. persons,         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| b. businesses, or   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| c. farm operations? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

If the answer to any of the above is yes, provide an explanation of the number of displaced persons, including businesses and farm operations; what fair and reasonable relocation payments and advisory services will be provided to any displaced persons; and what provisions will be made to ensure that safe, decent, and sanitary replacement dwellings will be available to such persons within a reasonable period of time prior to displacement. *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

#### **17. Handicapped accessibility:**

Will the proposed project be handicapped accessible?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

If No or N/A, provide a brief explanation as to how the project meets ADA handicapped accessibility requirements. *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

California State Parks strives to make sure that everyone - including visitors with disabilities - has access to the natural and cultural wonders that make up California State Parks. State Parks is continuing to work to make its parks more accessible. Many State Park units have facilities such as restrooms, campsites, and visitor centers that are designated accessible or other amenities such as beach wheelchairs.

#### **18. Environmental Justice:**

Will the project have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations? ☐ Yes ☒ No

## 19. State, Local and Tribal Laws:

The project is consistent with state, local, and tribal laws to protect the environment.

☒ Yes ☐ No

## 20. Environmental Hazards

Does the proposed property require evaluation and disclosure of known environmental hazards from prior use or operations? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, discuss below what type of contamination is on the site, or suspected to be on the project site and the status of clean-up activities. *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

Environmental assessment has been completed including soil and paint analysis, and results indicate no recommendations for further action. A former gasoline service station with an underground storage tank was removed with soil samples indicating no contamination and no further remediation necessary.

## 21. Public Coordination:

Has the proposed project been subject to public review and coordination through a public notice or other public review process? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If "yes," please describe below, or attach a description to the checklist, of the results of that process and note when the coordination occurred. If "no," please explain. *(If you need additional room attach a supplemental sheet to the checklist)*

The Piedras Blancas project will be presented in a public forum in the spring of 2006 to discuss future uses of the property.

---

OMB Control #0648-0459, expires 4/30/2006. NOAA is requesting this information in order to adequately assess the eligibility of proposed projects. The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 10 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Elaine Vaudreuil, OCRM, 1305 East-West Hwy (N/ORM), Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. This reporting is authorized under P.L. 107-77. Information submitted will be treated as public record. Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

# **Piedras Blancas**

## **Application for FY 2007 NOAA**

### **Coastal & Estuarine Land Conservation Program**

#### **Project Description**

The Piedras Blancas project will purchase 18 acres of magnificent coastal property in San Luis Obispo County. It is nestled within the renowned Hearst Ranch, which covers 128 square miles and includes 18 miles of coastline. In early 2005, the State of California protected 82,000 acres of the Hearst Ranch through a conservation easement and fee title acquisition. This amazing conservation endeavor transferred fee title of 13 miles of rugged, undeveloped coastline to California State Parks. The Piedras Blancas property is the last remaining privately held parcel west of Highway 1 within the 18-mile stretch of Hearst Ranch. This project will allow the California Department of Parks and Recreation to complete acquisition of this missing half mile of coast and to offer immediate safe public access to the coastal bluffs, trails, and beaches that exist on the property.

**Recreation, Conservation and Aesthetic Values:** Public acquisition of the Piedras Blancas property will significantly enhance the Hearst Ranch Conservation Project and is a crucial piece to fulfilling the State's vision to create public access on a contiguous stretch of coast in northern San Luis Obispo County.

Located along scenic Highway 1, the property offers an immediate opportunity for the public to safely pull off the highway, park in the existing paved parking area and access the beaches, bluffs and trails. The topography of the property includes gradual slopes down to two sandy beaches with classic marine terraces overlooking them. The low bluffs make for safe viewing areas of the dozens of elephant seals that migrate to the property each winter.

Acquisition of the Piedras Blancas property will provide a critical missing half mile of coast for the California Coastal Trail. This project also offers the ability to create a separate trail along the beaches and bluffs leading to the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse, owned by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) just 1 mile south of the property. BLM is currently restoring the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse and recently received jurisdiction of three large offshore rocks near Point Piedras Blancas that were part of the Hearst Ranch Conservation Project. Together these resources comprise the BLM's California Coastal National Monument. BLM and State Parks are working together to facilitate monthly public tours of the lighthouse, using the Hearst Castle Visitor Center as a staging area, which is located 7 miles south. The Piedras Blancas property would be an ideal location for a second staging area and to be able to offer walking tours to the lighthouse.

Due to the property's recreational zoning, there is excellent potential to offer unimproved campsites and to develop an interpretive center in an existing barn onsite for public education about the wildlife and coastal ecosystem. As this potential is developed, it would provide the only place for travelers to stop and camp on a 37-mile stretch of this famed and

highly visited stunning coastline. Piedras Blancas will provide a welcome respite to tourists traveling by car as well as hikers and bicyclists on the California Coastal Trail.

The property is located within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The bluffs overlooking the southern beach create a windbreak for warmer coastal recreation and a safe viewing area for visitors watching elephant seals during the winter months. Elephant seals have long been an attraction for visitors to the San Luis Obispo coast and the property could provide a much-needed site for an interpretive center about the elephant seal.

Arroyo del Corral Creek drains into the ocean at the southern beach attracting birds and other wildlife to the freshwater resources. The classic marine terraces of the property support a variety of native wildflowers and grasses.

The Piedras Blancas property offers travelers stunning visuals of the northern San Luis Obispo County coastline. Driving south along Highway One, travelers can look across the length of the property and see the William Randolph Hearst Memorial State Beach with the Piedras Blancas lighthouse in the distance. When coming from the other direction, travelers can see the coast and mountains that make up the famous Big Sur coast. This project will ensure that this view is preserved for future generations.

This stretch of State Highway One was designated in 1997 as a “State Scenic Highway.” In August 2003, the Federal Highway Administration declared State Route One an “All American Road,” the highest designation under the National Scenic Byways Program. The proposed project will prevent future commercial development on the Piedras Blancas property that would degrade the property’s existing scenic resources and keep the property off limits to the public.

**Threat:** In early 2005, the Trust for Public Land purchased the Piedras Blancas property using loan funds from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation. This strategy enabled TPL to take the property off the market while the necessary funds are secured for the public acquisition of the site by the State Department of Parks and Recreation. On the open market, there is a major risk that the property would be sold to a developer with plans to build an exclusive upscale hotel, which is allowed under current zoning. Private ownership would result in the construction of a seawall, known as shoreline armoring, to mitigate heavy erosion pressure on the property’s northern bluff and protect the investment of the private development. A seawall would damage the property’s coastal habitat in an area designated as part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and private ownership would make the bluffs and beaches off-limits to the public. Additional funding from CELCP in Fiscal Year 2007 will enable State Parks to acquire and protect this property in perpetuity.

**CELCP Priorities:** The Piedras Blancas project is an ideal candidate for CELCP funding because it fulfills several CELCP priorities, including:

- **California Coastal Trail:** The Piedras Blancas property is part of the proposed California Coastal Trail. As such, this project fulfills a specific implementation goal stated in the trail plan: “Design a public trail west of State Highway 1 from the Monterey County line south to San Simeon to provide safe pedestrian access that will

avoid degrading sensitive habitat areas and work with private landowners to acquire necessary access rights” (San Luis Obispo County Goal 1).

- **California Outdoor Recreation Plan:** The Piedras Blancas project addresses two key issues of this plan including Access to Public Park and Recreation Resources (Issue 3), and Protecting and Managing Natural Resource Values (Issue 4).
- **Coastal Conservancy Strategic Plan:** Project fulfills goals for the North San Luis Obispo County Coast/Hearst Ranch area, including goals for the Coastal Trail (Goal 1); Access (2); Acquisition of Significant Coastal Resource Properties (4); Coast/Ocean Habitat (5); and Water Quality, Habitat and Other Coastal Resources improvements (6).
- **Local Coastal Plan.** Complies with the certified San Luis Obispo County LCP for natural resource protection and public recreational access.

At the local level, the Piedras Blancas has been part of the vision for a coastal trail since 1991 when San Luis Obispo County first approved its *Trails Plan*. As envisioned by the County, this coastal bike route will connect multiple seaside communities and provide visitors and residents with the opportunity to travel between cities – without using a vehicle. To date roughly 10 percent of the trail system has been developed, mainly through the use of developer dedications in urbanized areas of the County. There is a need to acquire larger portions of trail through other acquisition techniques if the project is to be completed. The planned route of the trail as presented in the *County Bikeways Plan* crosses the Piedras Blancas property. The development of bike trails along the coast also supports multiple goals of the *San Luis Obispo County Regional Transportation Plan*, specifically the provision of multimodal transportation, environmental enhancement and protection, and visual enhancement. Finally, the proposed project will advance the goals of the *Agriculture and Open Space Element* of the San Luis Obispo County master plan, which seeks to protect recreation areas, ecosystems, environmentally sensitive resources, and scenic areas.

**(1) Project Site**

The 20-acre Piedras Blancas property is located in northern San Luis Obispo County, west of Highway 1 between the Monterey County line and the City of San Simeon. Directly to the north and south of the Piedras Blancas property is the 13-mile portion of the Hearst Ranch property, which State Parks recently acquired in fee title. Across the highway, lies the remaining 80,000+ acres of the Hearst Ranch. The property is the only remaining privately held parcel west of Highway 1 within the 18-mile stretch of the Hearst Ranch holdings.

**(2) Property Interest to be Acquired**

This project will acquire fee title of 18 acres of the 20-acre Piedras Blancas property.

**Acquiring Agency**

The acquiring agency is the California Department of Parks and Recreation (“State Parks”). Once purchased, it will be added to other lands recently acquired by State Parks to create unprecedented public access to this part of the San Luis Obispo County coast.

**(3) Source/Status of Matching Funds**

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Status</u>
State Coastal Conservancy	\$2,300,000	committed
CELCP FY 2006	\$ 500,000	committed
State Parks	\$ 500,000	pending
<u>Private Funding</u>	<u>\$ 200,000</u>	<u>pending</u>
Total	\$3,500,000	
Estimated FMV	\$5,000,000	
<b>Requested CELCP FY 2007 funds</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>	

**(4) Current Status of Landowner Negotiations/Appraisal**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is partnering with State Parks to secure the land in public ownership and raise the acquisition funds. Once funds have been secured, TPL will convey the property to State Parks for long-term ownership and management of the site. An appraisal of the property’s fair market value was completed November 2004. An updated appraisal will be commissioned prior to conveyance of the property to the State of California. The estimated fair market value is \$5,000,000.

**SCOPE OF WORK**  
**Piedras Blancas, San Luis Obispo County**  
**CELCP FY 07 Application**

**Project Size and Relationship to the Coast and/or Estuary**

The 20-acre Piedras Blancas property is located on the California coast in northern San Luis Obispo County, west of Highway 1 between the Monterey County line and the City of San Simeon. This beautiful stretch of the California coastline is often called the southern gateway to Big Sur, one of the world's best known and most visited coastal regions.

Directly to the north, south and east of the Piedras Blancas property is the 82,000 acre Hearst Ranch which the State of California recently protected through conservation easements and fee title acquisition. This amazing conservation endeavor included 18 miles of stunning coastline, 13 miles of which will someday be made easily accessible to the public. Piedras Blancas is the only remaining privately held parcel west of Highway 1 within the 18-mile stretch of the Hearst Ranch holdings and is a critical missing link in the California Coastal Trail.

The Piedras Blancas property has a half-mile of frontage on the Pacific Ocean, and lies within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, a preserve that encompasses 276 miles of shoreline and 5,322 square miles of ocean. Supporting one of the world's most diverse marine ecosystems, the Sanctuary is home to numerous mammals, seabirds, fishes, invertebrates and plants in a remarkably productive coastal environment. Piedras Blancas provides critical habitat and breeding grounds for one of the Sanctuary's resident species, the northern elephant seal, which is fully protected under California state law and federally protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972.

**Legal Rights to be Acquired**

This project will acquire fee title to the 20-acre Piedras Blancas property. CELCP funds will be directed towards the protection of 18 of those 20 acres.

**CELCP Goals**

The California CELCP Plan identifies coastal access in the vicinity of Piedras Blancas as a goal of statewide importance as this project complies with the *California Outdoor Recreation Plan*, the *California Coastal Trail Plan*, the *California Coastal Act (San Luis Obispo County Local Coastal Plan)* and the *Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan*.

The primary purpose of the Piedras Blancas project is conservation. Public acquisition of the Piedras Blancas property will significantly enhance the landmark Hearst Ranch Conservation Project, in which significant public resources have already been invested. Piedras Blancas is the lynchpin for this conservation project which protects the scenic qualities of the Hearst Ranch, prevents development, and provides public recreational opportunities where compatible with habitat values. Piedras Blancas compliments all these efforts and also helps create linkages between habitat corridors and recreational corridors that run from inland areas to the coast and along the coast itself. In addition, the Piedras Blancas project protects two riparian corridors.

**Recreation and Coastal Access**

Public acquisition of the Piedras Blancas property is a crucial part of the state of California's vision to create public access on a contiguous stretch of coast in northern San Luis Obispo County. This part of the county's coastline is highly visited due to the presence of the Hearst Castle which is an

international tourist attraction that draws upwards of 800,000 visitors annually. Piedras Blancas will provide important and urgently needed public access and facilities on the protected Hearst Ranch coastline for visitors and local residents, including the only public access for 18 miles that will be immediately available.

Located along scenic Highway 1, the property offers an opportunity for the public to safely pull off the highway, park in the existing paved parking area and access the beaches, bluffs and trails. The topography of the property includes gradual slopes down to two sandy beaches with classic marine terraces overlooking them. The low bluffs make for safe viewing areas of the northern elephant seals that migrate to the property each winter.

Acquisition of the Piedras Blancas property will provide a critical missing half mile of the California Coastal Trail and offers the ability to create a separate trail along the beaches and bluffs leading to the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse, owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) just 1 mile south of the property. The Piedras Blancas property would be an ideal location for a second staging area for tours of the lighthouse and could offer a starting point for walking tours to the lighthouse. The Piedras Blancas property also has the potential to provide the only low-cost camping accommodations along a 37 mile stretch of the coastline.

### **Ecological**

Piedras Blancas is located within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, a federal preserve which encompasses 276 miles of shoreline and 5,322 square miles of ocean. Protecting shoreline properties such as Piedras Blancas is a critical part of the overall effort to protect the Marine Sanctuary's abundant biodiversity. Piedras Blancas has particular significance for coastal resource protection because it serves as a haul out and rookery for thousands of northern elephant seals, a state and federally protected species. The number of seal pup births observed at Piedras Blancas in 2001 was about 1,950. In 2005, the annual seal population was estimated to be around 14,000 (United States Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division). Protected breeding grounds are essential to the continued recovery of this marine species that was once hunted almost to extinction.

Piedras Blancas supports several types of coastal habitat, including open dunes, coastal scrub and maritime chaparral which are known to provide important habitat for a wide variety of rare plants and animals, including the federally threatened Western snowy plover, the federally endangered California least tern, and the federally threatened Monterey spineflower. The classic marine terraces of the property support a variety of native wildflowers, and Arroyo del Corral Creek, one of two creeks on the property, drains into the ocean at the southern beach attracting birds and other wildlife to the freshwater resources.

### **Conservation**

The Piedras Blancas project serves as a critical compliment to the adjacent Hearst Ranch Conservation Project, which protected 82,000 acres of coast and rolling rangelands via fee title acquisition and conservation easements. Public ownership of the Piedras Blancas property will enhance the Hearst project by protecting critical viewshed, preventing inappropriate development, and providing immediate recreational opportunities where compatible with habitat values.

On the open market, there is a significant risk that Piedras Blancas would be sold to a developer with plans to build an exclusive upscale hotel, which is allowed under current zoning. Private ownership would result in the construction of a seawall, known as shoreline armoring, to mitigate

heavy erosion pressure on the property's northern bluff and protect the investment of the private development. A seawall would damage the property's coastal habitat in an area designated as part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

The uses being considered for the property under public ownership would not require the construction of a seawall and would protect the property's conservation values intact. Although some of the natural resources of Piedras Blancas have been disturbed by the site's prior commercial use, restoration efforts will be undertaken by The Trust for Public Land, the interim owner and steward of the property, to address this impairment.

### **Historical**

The property does not contain any identified cultural or archaeological resources of significance.

### **Aesthetic**

The Piedras Blancas property offers travelers stunning views of the northern San Luis Obispo County coastline. Driving south along Highway One, travelers can look across the length of the property and see the William Randolph Hearst Memorial State Beach with the Piedras Blancas lighthouse in the distance. When coming from the other direction, travelers can see the coast and mountains that make up the famous Big Sur coast. This project will ensure that this view is preserved for future generations.

This stretch of State Highway One was designated in 1997 as a "State Scenic Highway." In August 2003, the Federal Highway Administration declared State Route One an "All American Road," the highest designation under the National Scenic Byways Program. The proposed project will prevent future commercial development on the Piedras Blancas property that would degrade the property's existing scenic resources and keep the property off limits to the public.

In summary, Piedras Blancas offers a unique mix of ecological, recreational and aesthetic values that together contribute important benefits to the coastal and estuarine environment and to the public's experience and enjoyment of this remarkable piece of California's Central Coast.

### **Relevance to CELCP and Other State and Local Plans**

The Piedras Blancas project is an ideal candidate for CELCP funding because it fulfills several CELCP priorities, including:

- **California Coastal Trail:** The Piedras Blancas property is part of the proposed California Coastal Trail. As such, this project fulfills a specific implementation goal stated in the trail plan: "Design a public trail west of State Highway 1 from the Monterey County line south to San Simeon to provide safe pedestrian access that will avoid degrading sensitive habitat areas and work with private landowners to acquire necessary access rights" (San Luis Obispo County Goal 1).
- **California Outdoor Recreation Plan:** The Piedras Blancas project addresses two key issues of this plan including Access to Public Park and Recreation Resources (Issue 3), and Protecting and Managing Natural Resource Values (Issue 4).
- **Coastal Conservancy Strategic Plan:** Project fulfills goals for the North San Luis Obispo County Coast/Hearst Ranch area, including goals for the Coastal Trail (Goal 1); Access (2);

Acquisition of Significant Coastal Resource Properties (4); Coast/Ocean Habitat (5); and Water Quality, Habitat and Other Coastal Resources improvements (6).

- **Local Coastal Plan.** Complies with the certified San Luis Obispo County LCP for natural resource protection and public recreational access. Piedras Blancas is within the LCP's North Coast Planning Area, which specifically highlights the shoreline, North Coast creeks (such as the Arroyo del Corral Creek on the subject property), Piedras Blancas Dunes, and elephant seal colonies as Sensitive Resource Areas and priority areas for conservation and protection.

The Piedras Blancas project is consistent with several policies of the California Coastal Act, the State's management plan mandated by the Coastal Zone Management Act and approved by NOAA, including the protection and expansion of public access to the shoreline and recreational opportunities and resources, and protection of environmentally sensitive habitats. The California Coastal Act also called for local government participation through the development and approval of Local Coastal Plans (LCP). As noted above, the LCP for the Piedras Blancas area is the San Luis Obispo County LCP and falls within the North Coast Planning Area.

At the local level, the Piedras Blancas has been part of the vision for a coastal trail since 1991 when San Luis Obispo County first approved its *Trails Plan*. As envisioned by the County, this coastal bike route will connect multiple seaside communities and provide visitors and residents with the opportunity to travel between cities – without using a vehicle. To date roughly 10 percent of the trail system has been developed, mainly through the use of developer dedications in urbanized areas of the County. There is a need to acquire larger portions of trail through other acquisition techniques if the project is to be completed. The planned route of the trail as presented in the *County Bikeways Plan* crosses the Piedras Blancas property.

The development of bike trails along the coast also supports multiple goals of the *San Luis Obispo County Regional Transportation Plan*, specifically the provision of multimodal transportation, environmental enhancement and protection, and visual enhancement. Finally, the proposed project will advance the goals of the *Agriculture and Open Space Element* of the San Luis Obispo County master plan, which seeks to protect recreation areas, ecosystems, environmentally sensitive resources, and scenic areas.

### **Manageability of Project Site**

All commercial operations at Piedras Blancas have been terminated, and the site is currently being managed by TPL for limited day use and passive recreation. As part of its management plan, TPL is restoring native vegetation to a majority of the site. An on-site caretaker manages the property under contract with TPL.

Approximately two acres of the site are disturbed from earlier commercial use. Environmental assessment has been completed including soil and paint analysis, and results indicate no recommendations for further action. A former gasoline service station with an underground storage tank was removed with soil samples indicating no contamination and no further remediation necessary.

The properties immediately adjacent to Piedras Blancas are protected either as publicly managed open space or are substantially protected from development via conservation easements. Piedras

Blancas' status as an inholding makes it particularly appropriate for public ownership and management.

### **Long-term Use**

Once State Parks acquires Piedras Blancas, the agency will manage the property for passive recreation and natural resource protection. A public forum in the spring of 2007 will help guide the planning process for the property. Due to the property's recreational zoning, there is excellent potential to offer unimproved campsites that would provide the only place for travelers to stop and camp on a 37-mile stretch of this famed and highly visited coastline. Piedras Blancas will provide a welcome respite to tourists traveling by car as well as hikers and bicyclists on the California Coastal Trail. The potential also exists to develop an interpretive center in an existing barn onsite for public education about local wildlife and the coastal ecosystem. State Parks will manage any future development (i.e. potential visitor's center in an existing onsite structure, environmental camp sites) in an environmentally-sustainable and sensitive manner.

The Piedras Blancas project will preserve 18 acres in its natural setting to preclude any adverse effects to threatened or endangered species or critical habitat. In fact, this project prevents development on the site that would likely include the construction of a seawall that could damage coastal habitat in an area designated as part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

### **Threat of Conversion**

In early 2005, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) purchased the Piedras Blancas property using loan funds from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation. This strategy enabled TPL to take the property off the market while the necessary funds are secured for the public acquisition of the site by State Parks. On the open market, there is a major risk that the property would be sold to a developer with plans to build an exclusive upscale hotel, which is allowed under current zoning. Private ownership would result in the construction of a seawall, known as shoreline armoring, to mitigate heavy erosion pressure on the property's northern bluff and protect the investment of the private development. A seawall would damage the property's coastal habitat in an area designated as part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and private ownership would make the bluffs and beaches off-limits to the public. Additional funding from CELCP in Fiscal Year 2007 will enable State Parks to acquire and protect this property in perpetuity.

### **Project Readiness and Ability to Acquire Land**

TPL currently owns the property and is partnering with State Parks to secure the funds needed to transfer the land into public ownership as part of California's State Parks system. Once funds have been secured, TPL will convey the property to State Parks for long-term ownership and management of the site. Because of its unique location as a link between other State Park holdings and the recreational popularity of this beautiful area, the acquisition of the Piedras Blancas property is a top priority for State Parks.

TPL completed its due diligence prior to acquiring the property, including a title report and title insurance and commissioned an environmental analysis. The environmental assessment has been completed including soil and paint analysis, and results indicate no recommendations for further action. A former gasoline service station with an underground storage tank was removed with soil samples indicating no contamination and no further remediation necessary.

A purchase agreement between TPL and State Parks has been drafted and the two parties will be working together over the next six to eight months to craft a final document. An appraisal of the property's fair market value was completed in November 2004. An updated appraisal will be commissioned prior to conveyance of the property to the State of California. The estimated fair market value is \$5,000,000.

### **Ability to Manage Land**

The acquiring agency and long term steward of the property is the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). Once purchased by State Parks, Piedras Blancas will be added to other Hearst Ranch holdings recently acquired by State Parks to create unprecedented public access to this part of the San Luis Obispo County coast.

Operation and management costs and staffing needs will be built into the management plan for the Hearst Ranch acquisition. State Parks has extensive experience managing properties for both public recreation and resource protection on California's Central Coast. State Parks has a particular expertise in managing properties with significant elephant seal populations, such as Ano Nuevo State Reserve which is home to the world's largest elephant seal breeding colony.

### **Other Pertinent Information**

Piedras Blancas is well known locally for its prior use as a rest stop and hotel frequented by visitors traveling up and down the coast. Under public ownership by State Parks the property will continue to serve both visitors and local community residents and will provide an important compliment to the adjacent Hearst Ranch Conservation Project.

Project partners on Piedras Blancas include the California Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Parks and Recreation and the federal Bureau of Land Management.

### **Project Timeline**

Completed	Initial appraisal
May 2006	Commission updated appraisal
June 2006	Submit additional documentation to NOAA for approval
August 2007	Acquire property from The Trust for Public Land

**Piedras Blancas  
San Luis Obispo County, CA  
CELCP FY 07 Application**

**BUDGET**

Total cost of acquisition:     \$5,000,000    

Total funding requested from the CELCP:     \$1,500,000    

**PROJECT BUDGET TABLE**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount (Note if cash or in-kind value of land or services)</b>	<b>Funding Source (Include information on all partners/entities making contributions to the project)</b>	<b>Funds Already Expended? (yes/no)</b>
Land	5,000,000	State Coastal Conservancy, State Parks, CELCP 06	no
<b>TOTAL:</b>			

*(Suggested Categories: Land, Appraisals, Title Opinion, etc...)*

## CELCP BUDGET TABLE

*In this table, please identify the costs associated only with requested CELCP funding and match.*

Category	Federal Share	State/Local Share	Totals
Land	1,500,000	1,500,000	3,000,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>			

*(Suggested Categories: Land, Appraisals, Title Opinion, etc...)*

### **Land Acquisition Costs**

An appraisal of the property's fair market value was completed in November 2004. An updated appraisal will be commissioned prior to conveyance of the property to the State of California. The estimated fair market value is \$5,000,000.

### **Matching Funds**

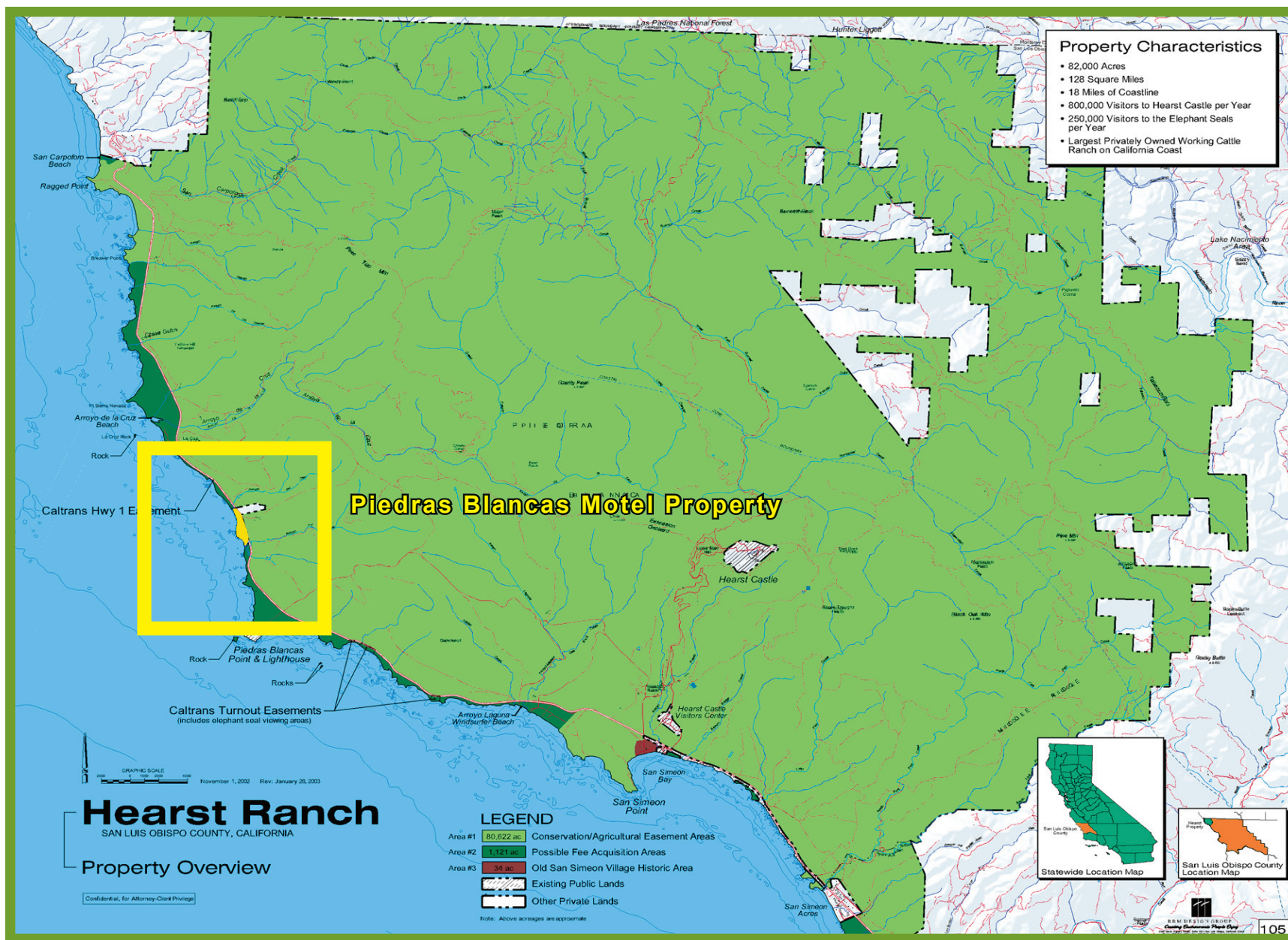
#### **Source/Status of Matching Funds**

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Status</u>
State Coastal Conservancy	\$2,300,000	committed
CELCP FY 2006	\$ 500,000	committed
State Parks	\$ 500,000	pending
Private Funding	\$ 200,000	pending

Total	\$3,500,000
-------	-------------

Estimated FMV	<u>\$5,000,000</u>
---------------	--------------------

<b>Requested CELCP FY 2007 funds</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>
--------------------------------------	--------------------









The 20-acre Piedras Blancas property is the only privately held parcel west of Highway 1 and the missing link in the California Coastal Trail within the 18-mile stretch of the Hearst Ranch holdings in coastal San Luis Obispo County.



During TPL's interim ownership, TPL will remove the visual blight of the existing gas station from the property, restore native vegetation to the site, and open the property for public day use.



Highway One along San Luis Obispo County's northern coast is designated a National Scenic Byway. Acquisition of this property by State Parks will provide visitors the opportunity to pull off the highway, park in the existing parking lot, and enjoy the county's sandy beaches and stunning coastline. The Piedras Blancas Lighthouse, seen in the background of this photograph, is located just 1 mile south of the property and is currently accessible through tours arranged from Hearst Castle, 7 miles away. This property provides an opportunity for the development of a second staging area for tours to the lighthouse as well as a new hiking tour via the California Coastal Trail.